

Empathy as a Practice

WOULD YOU HIDE ME?

# Unbroken

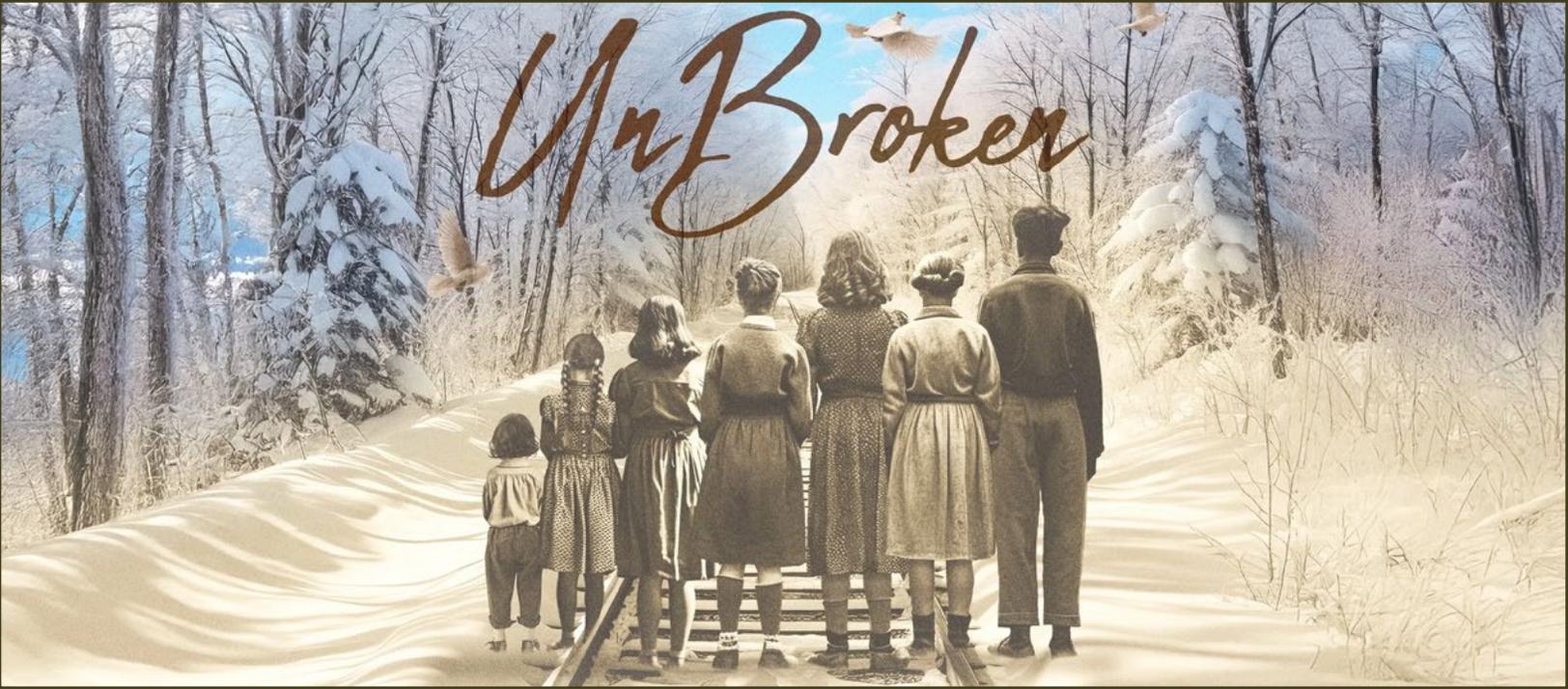


DE LAMORANDIERE ROCK PRODUCTIONS in association with MAKEMAKE ENTERTAINMENT presents "UNBROKEN"  
with JONATHAN SNIPES directed by MISFIT and AARON SOFFIN  
cast by BETH LANE & JOEL MOODY BARBARA & MARK GERSON JEN LANE LANDOLT & MARK LANDOLT  
ANDY HALL JENNIFER SOPRO HALL & ANGUS WALL produced by MAI ANAUIE BAK STACY KESSLER-AUGNST & DOUG PROCHILDO  
written by BETH LANE

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**JOURNEYS IN FILM™**  
educating for global understanding





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### Note to users:

*Each section is designed to be used independently and can stand alone for learning and growth in these areas in connection with the film. Handouts connect with specific sections but can be used in other ways. Sections can also be used in conjunction with one another, and some sections include suggested connections to one another. You can also use the guide in its entirety for a rich, in-depth learning experience.*



# FACILITATION GUIDELINES



Filmmakers use immersive storytelling to produce intense thoughts and emotions in the viewer. **Journeys in Film** uses this powerful medium as a springboard for meaningful dialogue around humanity's most pressing issues. In this guide, you will find suggestions for leading productive conversations that broaden perspectives, increase global competency, encourage empathy, and build new paradigms for education.

- When watching a film or having a powerful discussion, normalize taking breaks and exercising bodily autonomy. Acknowledge that conversations around complex topics can be vulnerable, complicated, and challenging. Encourage members to voice and do what is right for them without needing to explain or apologize.
- People do their best when they know what to expect. Start and end your meetings on time.
- Share or co-create your intentions for the meeting.
- Create your space. If possible, share snacks or find other ways to create an inviting, comfortable atmosphere.
- Create a trustworthy space. Maintain confidentiality and only speak to your own experience.
- Minimize distractions while you are together. Silence cell phones and devices so you can give your full attention to the conversation.
- Practice whole-body listening. Listen to words, tone, body language, and the feeling in the atmosphere.
- Acknowledge voices that may be absent. Is there a lived experience that isn't represented in your group? Who are the bridge people who might be able to connect you with other people in your community who might bring new perspectives to the table?
- Adopt an attitude of positive intent. If someone says something that bothers you, assume positive intent and ask for more information.
- Ignite your curiosity around other people's views and opinions. Listen to understand, not to respond. You don't need to agree with others in your group or make it known that you are "right" to have a worthwhile conversation.
- Words matter. Be open to learning and practicing new ways to communicate with others.
- Be clear, direct, and kind in your communication. Nobody benefits when you bottle your opinions.
- Everyone has blind spots and biases; cultivate a space of grace as you enter into new territory together.
- If a conversation gets heated, practice acknowledging the tension, pausing as a group, and taking a collective breath together before diving back in or taking a longer break to reset.
- Privilege your relationships with others over the content or agenda of the meeting. Show each other kindness.
- Create a closing ritual that celebrates the time you've spent together and either gives closure or gives members something to think about before your next meeting.



# A LETTER FROM LIAM NEESON



**Liam Neeson,  
Journeys in Film  
Founding Spokesperson**

Working in films such as *Michael Collins* and *Schindler's List*, I've seen the power of film not only to entertain, but also to change the way audiences see themselves and the world. When I first met Joanne Ashe, herself the daughter of Holocaust survivors, she explained to me her vision for a new educational program called ***Journeys in Film: Educating for Global Understanding***. I grasped immediately how such a program could transform the use of film in the classroom from a passive viewing activity to an active, integral part of learning.

I have served as the national spokesperson for ***Journeys in Film*** since its inception because I absolutely believe in the effectiveness of film as an educational tool that can teach our young people to value and respect cultural diversity and to see themselves as individuals who can make a difference. ***Journeys in Film*** uses interdisciplinary, standards-aligned lesson plans that can support and enrich classroom programs in English, social studies, math, science, and the arts. Using films as a teaching tool is invaluable, and ***Journeys in Film*** has succeeded in creating outstanding film-based curricula integrated into core academic subjects.

By using carefully selected documentary and international films that depict life in other countries and cultures around the globe, combined with interdisciplinary curricula to transform entertainment media into educational media, we can use the classroom to bring the world to every student. Our film program dispels myths and misconceptions, enabling students to overcome biases; it connects the future leaders of the world with one another. As we provide teachers with lessons aligned to Common Core Standards, we are also laying a foundation for understanding, acceptance, trust, and peace.

Please share my vision of a more harmonious world where cross-cultural understanding and the ability to converse about complex issues are keys to a healthy present and a peaceful future. Whether you are a student, an educator, a filmmaker, or a financial supporter, I encourage you to participate in the ***Journeys in Film*** program.

Please join this vital journey for our kids' future. They are counting on us. ***Journeys in Film*** gets them ready for the world.

Sincerely,

# SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITHOUT ACCESS TO BIOLOGICAL FAMILY HISTORIES



*UnBroken* centers on archival research, family history, and ancestral memory. However, educators should be mindful that not all learners have access to information about their biological families. Some may be adopted, in foster care, estranged from family members, displaced by migration, or lacking records due to war, incarceration, or historical trauma. Others may simply not feel comfortable discussing family matters.

To ensure an inclusive learning environment:

## 1. Broaden the definition of “family history.”

Instead of focusing solely on biological lineage, invite learners to explore:

- chosen family
- cultural or community traditions
- important adults in their lives
- neighborhood or local histories
- community archives or public records
- collective identities they participate in

## 2. Provide multiple entry points into genealogical inquiry.

Students may:

- research local historical sites
- interview a mentor or community elder
- analyze a cultural practice meaningful to them
- reflect on stories from their community, school, or neighborhood
- explore a historical event connected to their identity

No learner should be required to disclose personal or sensitive information.

## 3. Offer alternatives to sharing personal stories.

Include options such as private journaling, fictionalized narratives, archival exploration, or creative projects that do not require personal family details.

## 4. Avoid assumptions.

Use inclusive language such as “people who influence you,” “stories connected to your community,” or “a tradition that shapes your identity” to prevent placing learners in uncomfortable positions.

## 5. Build psychologically safe environments.

Genealogical and historical inquiry can evoke strong emotions. Offer opportunities to opt out, step away, or choose a different activity. Normalize diverse family experiences and emphasize that identity is shaped by many forces, not only ancestry.

By creating flexibility, honoring privacy, and recognizing diverse lived experiences, educators can ensure that all learners can engage meaningfully with the film’s themes of memory, identity, justice, and repair.



# INTRODUCTION TO THE FILM



***UnBroken*** is the miraculous true story of the seven Weber siblings, ages 6–18, who evaded capture and death, and ultimately escaped Nazi Germany. Following their mother’s incarceration and murder at Auschwitz, they relied solely on their youthful bravado and the kindness of strangers.

After being hidden in a laundry hut by a benevolent German farmer, the children spent two years on their own in war-torn Germany. Emboldened by their father’s mandate that they “always stay together,” the children used their own cunning instincts to fight through hunger, loneliness, rape, bombings, and fear. Climactically separated from their father, the siblings were forced to declare themselves orphans in order to escape to a new life in America. Unbeknownst to them, this salvation would finally tear them apart, not to be reunited for another 40 years.

Filmmaker Beth Lane, daughter of the youngest Weber sibling, embarks on a quest to retrace their steps, seeking answers to long-held questions about her family’s survival. The film examines the journey of the Weber family as told through conversations with living siblings — now in their eighties and nineties — while Beth and her crew road trip across Germany, following the courageous, tumultuous, and harrowing path taken by her family over 80 years ago.

***UnBroken*** is Beth Lane’s feature directorial debut, and it is both a professional milestone and a personal quest to immortalize the incredible survival of the Weber siblings — the only family of seven Jewish siblings living in Nazi Germany known to have survived and emigrated together.

# THE WEBER SIBLINGS



**Alfons Weber**  
1927 – 2016

*Alfons was born as the first child and only son of Alexander & Lina Weber in Paderborn, Germany. As a teenager, he lost his mother and was separated from his father for long periods of time, so he took on the role as the protector of his six younger sisters, who all adored him. Alfons settled in Chicago, where he married and raised a family, working as a physicist. He had planned to take a trip to Germany with his niece, Beth, but his death in 2016 meant that this trip never came to be. Beth's film **UnBroken** is her way of finally taking that trip with her uncle.*



**Senta Saulters**  
1929 – 2016

*The eldest Weber daughter, Senta was born in Paderborn, Germany. After immigrating to the United States, she met her husband, Bob Saulters, with whom she raised four sons and co-owned small businesses in Chicago. She was a devout Catholic, and a creative soul with a love for poetry, dancing, and singing. Her lovely singing voice is missed dearly by her siblings and entire family.*



**Ruth Gilliana**  
1930 – 2023

*Ruth was born in Berlin and came to be the driving force that would ultimately get the seven Weber siblings out of Germany once and for all, thanks to her unrivaled street smarts and moxie. Ruth raised five children in Chicago and she had four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She was an avid Tiger Woods fan!*





Gertrude

**Gertrude Chapman**  
**1935 – 2026**

*Born in Berlin, Gertrude lived in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, along with the love of her life, Sherwin Chapman, her husband of over 55 years. Together, they raised three children in the Jewish faith, and had six grandchildren and one great grandchild. Gertrude was the nerve center of communication once the Weber siblings came to Chicago, as well as the chief cook and bottle communicator.*



Renee

**Renee Dicker**  
**1935 – 2020**

*Born in Berlin, Renee eventually had three children, four grandchildren and a great-grandchild. Her matter-of-fact, no-nonsense approach to life has an enduring quality that inspires all of us to live an authentic and meaningful life.*



Judith

**Judith Lal**  
**Born 1937**

*Judith was born in Berlin. As a young adult she worked at The University of Chicago and met her adoring husband, Harbans Lal. Judith converted to Sikhism when she married, and together, they raised three children. Today, she lives in Texas and enjoys spending as much time with her granddaughter as she can.*



Bela

**Ginger (Bela) Lane**  
**Born 1939**

*The youngest Weber sibling, Ginger Lane was born Bela Weber in Berlin, Germany. After immigrating to the United States at age six, she was adopted by the neurosurgeon I. Joshua Speigel and his wife, Rosalynde, an artist who raised Bela in an artistic household. She became a ballerina and eventually married and had three children. She is the proud grandmother to seven grandchildren, and is the recipient of numerous awards for her contributions to disabilities advocacy, as well as dance and choreography. In the Spring of 2022, Ginger's image was featured on Chicago bus stops and billboards in honor of Women's History Month!*





*Photo by Austin Hargraves*

**Beth Lane, Director**

On the morning of September 11, 2001, I was sitting in a coffee shop next to the Empire State Building in New York City when my phone rang. “Go outside,” my husband said. “The World Trade Center buildings have been hit by an airplane.” I thought he was joking. But I went outside, looked down the barrel of Fifth Avenue and saw that the sky was changing. Smoke rose where the towers had stood. I watched in disbelief as the impossible unfolded. Frozen. Silent. I called a friend in the suburbs and asked her to pick up my three children from school — “just in case.” I even gave her my sister’s phone number in Illinois... “just in case.”

I had grown up believing the Holocaust could never happen again. Ever. But on that terrible sunny day, something shifted. The fear. The hatred. The shock of pure evil. It all felt terrifyingly familiar.

My mother, Ginger, was born into poverty in Berlin. As a little girl, she watched the Gestapo kidnap her mother, who was later murdered at Auschwitz. My mom, known as Bela, became one of the hidden children of the Holocaust. Against all odds, she survived. Bela and her six siblings emigrated from Germany to the United States, were then separated into different foster homes, and eventually, my mother was adopted. Her American life was born with loss, silence, education, culture, and love.

In 1986, 40 years after leaving Europe, Ginger, my mother, reunited with her biological brother and sisters. I found out after the reunion. I wasn’t there. And I’ve always carried that absence with me.

Ten years later, Alfons, Senta, Ruth, Gertrude, Renee, and Judith stood together again — this time on my mother’s front lawn, beneath a towering paper Statue of Liberty. That gathering unlocked something. We opened scrapbooks. Studied photographs. Read a short memoir Uncle Alfons had written. Eventually, he returned to the village of Worin, Germany, where the children had been hidden. With local historians, he submitted an application to Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Museum in Jerusalem, to honor the farmers who saved them, Arthur and Paula Schmidt. In 2015, the Schmidts were officially named Righteous Among the Nations, and in 2018, a ceremony in The Gardens of The Righteous took place to unveil their names on the granite walls. Uncle Alfons passed away just months before the ceremony, in 2017.

Seventy-two years after my mother fled Europe, she decided to pick up where her brother Alfons left off and return to their hiding place in Worin. I went with her. That journey altered the shape of both our lives. Three weeks later, the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, took place, a white supremacist rally. And I knew the story I had inherited now carried urgency. I had never made a film before. But without question, this story needed to be told.



On October 8, 2023 — less than 24 hours after Hamas attacked and kidnapped civilians at a concert in Israel — **UnBroken** had its world premiere. The timing was surreal. One week later, it won Best Documentary Feature Premiere. That single moment ignited a forty-city tour, a national theatrical release, and finally a Netflix debut on Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. Within 24 hours, **UnBroken** soared to #5 in the Top 10 movies in the U.S. on Netflix. To date, over 1.5 million people have streamed our film.

Why does it connect? Because **UnBroken** is not just a film. It is an invitation.

To feel.

To remember.

To examine who we are and who we choose to be.

I did not create **UnBroken** to make a political statement or a religious one. I made it to build empathy. To remind us that caring is an action. That standing up for one another is a choice. That the way we treat others is the truest measure of who we are.

**UnBroken** carries a message that is both urgent and enduring. And after audiences absorb its message, I want more than reflection. I want audiences to feel more deeply, care more fiercely and choose, in their own lives, to be upstanders. For themselves, for their communities, and for humanity.

— Beth Lane, Director



Photo by Chad Batka

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE HOLOCAUST AND JEWISH REFUGEES



## Germany Between the Wars

The German Empire shattered after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles forced the loss of key industrial land and dictated that Germany pay significant reparations to allied countries. Blockades, continued shortages of food, fuel, and manufactured goods, and skyrocketing inflation stymied the rebuilding of the economy. Anger over the treaty and social unrest spurred revolutionary movements and political instability, paving the way for radical nationalist ideologies.

Amid this turmoil, the German Workers' Party — renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi Party, in 1920 — rose to prominence by opposing the Treaty of Versailles and promoting a vision of moral renewal rooted in antisemitism. Despite the party being briefly outlawed, by 1932 it was the largest political party in Germany. Shortly after Adolf Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, the Parliament (Reichstag) was destroyed by an act of arson. This event enabled Hitler to suspend civil liberties and political opposition. In retribution, the government rounded up Communists (the group blamed for the fire) and opened the first concentration camps to hold enemies of the state at Nohra, Oranienberg, and Dachau. When President Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler merged the offices of President and Chancellor, declaring himself Führer, or leader of the country.



## **The Rise of a New Antisemitism**

Antisemitism had deep roots in the continent, rearing its head throughout the two-millennium history of Jewish communities in Europe. Late 19th-century “Social Darwinism” gave it new, pseudo-scientific language, postulating a hierarchy of distinct human “races” in constant conflict with one another for superiority and survival. ***(It is critical to note that there is no biological evidence to support the theory of race or inherent difference between races.)*** The “white” or “Aryan race” crowned this bogus hierarchy while Jewish peoples were seen as a distinct and inferior race. Although Jews represented only approximately 1.7% of Europe’s population in 1933, antisemites claimed they held an outsized influence on culture, politics, economics, and media. At the same time, the eugenics movement was gaining favor and influence within the racial policies of the United States and was much admired by Germans arguing for a racially “pure” populace. Postwar Germany’s social and economic crises created fertile ground for these ideas, offering scapegoats for national humiliation and decline and a roadmap toward desired supremacy.

## **Persecution, Emigration, and Genocide**

The Holocaust was not a single event, but an escalating and evolving series of laws, policies, and actions perpetuated by the Nazi government, their allies, and collaborators against Jewish people between 1933 and 1945. These actions deprived Jewish citizens of their rights, property, and freedom, and included isolated and mass episodes of violence that ultimately culminated in genocide.

As persecution intensified in the early days of the Nazi Regime, hundreds of thousands of Jews fled Germany and Austria, creating a global refugee crisis. Many Jewish, secular, and Christian organizations worked tirelessly throughout the war and in its aftermath to assist Jews in emigrating. By 1939, 400,000 had escaped to neighboring countries, the United States, Palestine, Great Britain, Central and South America, and the Japanese territory of Shanghai; many were later caught as Nazi territory expanded. Countries began to implement strict Jewish quotas, and steep emigration taxes levied by Germany left many trapped.

When emigration was impossible, Jewish families sought ways to protect their children. The Kindertransport brought 10,000 Jewish children to Britain between 1938 and 1940, where they were housed with British foster families or in residential homes and schools. A similar, smaller program ran in the United States. Although meant as a temporary measure, most of these children never saw their families again.

After invading Poland in September 1939, the Nazi Regime established ghettos for the forced segregation of Jewish populations. Hundreds of ghettos were created across Central and Eastern Europe, as well as 20,000 concentration camps to imprison enemies of the state without recourse to normal legal proceedings. Thousands of Jews in both the ghettos and camps died from starvation, disease, and violence.

By late 1941, all emigration of Jews was forbidden, and Hitler ordered the remaining 338,000 Jews in the Greater German Reich and Protectorate to be deported. The result was forced displacement to severely overcrowded ghettos in Eastern Europe, mass executions by mobile killing units, forced labor, and eventually the development of a plan the Nazis called “The Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” This last stage of the Holocaust included the deportation of the Jewish people to thousands of concentration and forced labor camps, in addition to six death camps designed for mass executions.

## Rescue and Survival Amidst the Holocaust

The Weber siblings featured in *UnBroken* were among only a few thousand Jews that survived by hiding in Germany. Across occupied Europe, individuals and networks risked their lives to save Jewish people, providing shelter, food, supplies, false papers, or safe passage. As was the case with the Webers, children were often separated from their parents and sent into hiding. Many more were left orphaned when their parents were arrested or murdered. In France, organized networks smuggled up to 15,000 Jewish children into Spain and Switzerland, while Danish resistance fighters organized fishermen to ferry 7,200 Jews to neutral Sweden. Countless brave efforts like these saved tens of thousands of lives.

Most dangerous of all was sheltering Jewish people, as the Schmidts did for the Weber children. Individuals and families were hidden in secret rooms, attics, cellars, and barns. In other instances, organized networks placed Jewish teens on farms in the Netherlands and France, where they hid in plain sight, or passed Jewish children off as gentiles in Christian orphanages, schools, and convents. An acute challenge was finding enough extra food and other supplies for hidden Jewish people without attracting attention during a time of shortages and rations. For this reason, many people rotated their hiding places frequently. Sometimes survival depended on the support of a few individuals, but often it required a chain of helpers. It is estimated that 30,000 people were required to save 5,000–7,000 Jewish people in Berlin.

The State of Israel created an award called Righteous Among Nations to commemorate individuals who were documented to have risked their lives to harbor, support, and save Jewish people from the Holocaust. To date, 28,486 people have been honored, including Arthur and Paula Schmidt. When their names were added, they were only the 600th names from Germany, a very small number in comparison to other countries.

## Shattered Families After the War

By the war's end, the Nazis had murdered six million of Europe's 9.5 million Jews, along with five million other individuals: Communists, Roma, Black people, political opponents, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, the disabled, and prisoners of war. Displaced Persons camps administered by allied forces and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration housed more than 800,000 people in the immediate aftermath of the war, including 250,000 Jewish survivors awaiting resettlement. These homeless survivors faced the same insecurity, isolation, and trauma that many refugees still endure today. The last DP camp in Europe didn't close until 1952.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, survivors searched desperately for missing family members. Many children, raised from a young age under false identities or hidden in Christian homes, struggled to reconnect or even recognize their surviving family. Reunification in many instances brought about identity crises, trauma, and even legal custody battles. Thousands of other Jewish children grew up in orphanages when no family remained.

Within this context, we can see the survival of the Weber children as emblematic of the plight of Jewish families, and extraordinary in the fact that all seven siblings and their father survived the war. Without the bravery and selflessness of those who helped them hide, survive, and ultimately emigrate, their story of hope and resilience would surely have been a tragedy.



## Sources

[The Holocaust Encyclopedia](#) of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

[The Holocaust Explained](#) from The Wiener Holocaust Library

[History of the Holocaust Timeline](#) from the Montreal Holocaust Museum.

## Additional Resources

The case of two families who are still trying to find and reunite with lost children are chronicled by Joanna Beata Michlic for [The Wiener Holocaust Library](#).

[The Imperial War Museum](#) hosts an online exhibition documenting six of the children who were part of Britain's Kindertransport. [The European Holocaust Research Infrastructure](#) project has translated letters of some children, documenting their experience of Kindertransport.

Video testimonies recount Jewish children's experiences of hiding, escaping, and being incarcerated during the Holocaust: [Child Survivors of the Jewish Holocaust](#), California State University, Northridge.

## Useful Terms

**Antisemitism:** A certain perception of Jewish people, which may be expressed as hatred toward the Jewish community. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. (This definition utilized for this guide was adopted by the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance](#).)<sup>1</sup>

**Aryan:** Originally a term used to describe speakers of Indo-European languages, the meaning evolved under Social Darwinism to describe a mythical "superior" or "master race" of people, specifically white Christian Europeans.

**Concentration camp:** A prison or other facility used for the internment of "enemies of the state," including political prisoners, minorities, and other groups of people deemed "undesirable." Prisoners were detained and held indefinitely in harsh conditions without recourse to normal judicial proceedings, sometimes for the purposes of forced labor, transportation, or execution, as with the Nazi extermination or death camps.

**Eugenics:** The discredited and racially biased study of human genetics that led to a set of controlled selective breeding practices aimed at "improving" the genetic quality of the population.

**Ghetto:** A segregated part of a city where Jewish people were forced to live, often in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

**Pogrom:** A Russian word meaning "to wreak havoc, to demolish violently." The term has historically been used to refer to violent attacks and riots against Jewish people.

**Reparations:** The act of making amends; compensation paid by a defeated nation for damages to or expenditures of another nation as a result of hostilities.

<sup>1</sup> Antisemitism definition adapted from "What Is Antisemitism?" IHRA, May 5, 2025. <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

## SECTION 3: *EMPATHY AS A PRACTICE — LISTENING, REFLECTING, ACTING*



### DRIVING QUESTION

*In the film **UnBroken**, one of the Weber descendants says, “When you’re faced with adversity, who do you become?” Put another way, “When faced with injustice or suffering in the world, what kind of person do you want to be? What morals, ethics, or beliefs do you hope will guide you in your choices?”*

Empathy is a core thread running through **UnBroken**, from the quiet bravery of those who sheltered and helped the Weber siblings, to the emotional labor of family members unearthing painful memories. Empathy is a learned skill that is at the heart of other traits such as kindness, cooperation, tolerance, and even forgiveness. It is the thing that best determines whether we help someone else in need. Like all skills, it requires practice to develop fully.

Empathy also connects with civic engagement and action. When individuals practice compassion and consider the feelings and needs of others, they view their community and society more broadly in a different light, and this can lead to a feeling of responsibility for oneself in connection with others and can drive an interest in civic engagement and community building.

#### **Note to Facilitators:**

Discussions and activities around empathy and perspective-taking can be challenging for some learners, particularly those who are neurodivergent. Activities that rely on recognizing nonverbal cues or abstract scenarios may unintentionally cause stress or feelings of exclusion for some participants. It is useful to underscore that **empathy is not expressed in one uniform way**, and neurodiverse individuals may demonstrate understanding, care, or moral reasoning differently than their neurotypical peers. **Our goal should be to expand what empathy looks like and provide accessible ways for all learners to connect meaningfully and participate.**



## Personal Reflection

1. What is the difference between sympathy and empathy? Have you ever felt empathy for someone that caused you to take compassionate action on their behalf? Have you ever felt that you should do something for someone else, but then didn't? What stopped you?
2. Think of a person with whom you disagree with or dislike. Make a list of similarities and differences that you think you have. How many similarities can you think of? Next, write a short dialogue between the two of you, taking the other person's perspective. While you don't need to change your mind, does this change how you feel about the other person?
3. Have you ever read a book or watched a movie from the perspective of someone who is different from you that challenged your thoughts, beliefs, or understanding of the world? Journal or sketch about that experience. Can you pinpoint what it was that helped you see things differently? Has that experience changed your behavior?

## Discussion Questions

1. There is a poignant moment in *UnBroken* (Kids in the courtyard 00:35:32) when filmmaker Beth Lane approaches a group of teens in Berlin and asks, "If this [the Holocaust] were to happen again, would you hide me?" One teen replies, "I would like to say yes and I hope that I would make that decision in the moment, but you never know." Another teen says, "I think I would do it because I'm a refugee. I have family here now and I'm so grateful for that because it could also happen to me." Empathy may not always lead to action. What might motivate you to take action in the face of real or perceived risks or other barriers?
2. In the film *UnBroken*, Ruth reports that her mother, Lina, used to say, "You help others, you help yourself." What does this mean to you? Can you recall a time that helping someone else made you feel better or also helped you?

3. Empathy is a skill that, just like a muscle, needs to be exercised. *UnBroken* offers the viewer opportunities to exercise their muscles of empathy and compassion. The filmmaking team carefully edited the story with this in mind. Reflect on how the film encouraged you to think about compassion and empathy. Brainstorm ways in which you have learned empathy, and what more you could do to exercise and build this skill. Consider things like the people in your life, the media you consume, volunteer activities, where and how you spend your money, and how you speak, listen, and respond to others.

## Extension Activities

### 1. Create an Empathy Map.

There are so many powerful and poignant moments that the Weber siblings recount in *UnBroken*. Assign or have students select one story from the film (or another story of resilience) and design an empathy map.

Key moments from *UnBroken* for this activity:

- Gertrude and Bela discuss their mother's arrest by the Gestapo (00:21:23 – 00:24:33)
  - Bela talks about her experience of hiding on the farm (00:38:33 – 00:40:54)
  - Ruth recounts escaping the Russian army and riding a bike to Berlin (00:48:00 – 00:51:57)
  - Ruth and Gertrude talk about their family being separated in Chicago (01:13:54 – 01:18:50)
  - Ruth discusses Bela's adoption (01:13:54 – 01:18:50)
  - Bela sees her sister and/or her father after her adoption (01:13:54 – 01:18:50)
- a. As a class or in small groups, discuss the ways in which we can move beyond what people say to infer deeper meaning.

*Facilitator tip: Consider things like word choice, the use of euphemisms or humor, how fast someone is speaking, tone of voice, body language, and the listener's own background knowledge and experiences. See Note to Facilitator at the beginning of this session.*

b. Give learners a copy of the **Empathy Map Handout (Handout 2)**. Have them record the name of the person whose perspective they are considering (subject). Some clips have more than one sibling recounting the story; learners can focus on one person or all of them. If possible, allow them to rewatch a clip of the story they are considering. Ask learners to record key details about what their subject said, including words or phrases that jumped out to them. Then have them record their subject's physical actions and what they can infer from them, as well as their potential thoughts and feelings.

c. As a large learning group, in small groups, or through reflective writing, explore the following questions:

- i. Did this activity deepen your empathy for the subject and their lived experience? Do you understand it in a different way?
- ii. What personal experience or background knowledge did you draw on as you made your inferences about your subject's thoughts and feelings or interpreted their actions and motivations? Were you reminded of anyone or anything else?
- iii. How might your personal experience or background knowledge shape the kinds of conclusions you came to about your subject's thoughts, feelings, and motivations?

**2. Facilitate a listening circle** (also sometimes referred to as a talking circle or restorative circle).

Listening circles are safe places for individuals to share and listen to each other's perspectives, often in response to a shared challenge or experience. The goal is empathy and understanding rather than problem-solving or debate. Listening circles draw on a rich indigenous tradition of turn-taking, consensus decision-making, and deep listening.

*Facilitator's tip: Listening circles work best in groups who know each other well and have strong, respectful, and supportive group dynamics. It is critical that participants feel trust and safety to express themselves. Listening circles can be used to address a variety of issues, including interpersonal conflict, issues or events in the classroom or school community, or to help learners process larger events in their lives or the world around them. Listening circles are most effective when practiced frequently. See the resources linked below for more information on listening circles and how to conduct them.*

- a. As a group, come up with guidelines or rules for your listening circle.

*Facilitator's tip: Consider things like confidentiality, voluntary participation, deep listening, and speaking one at a time with no interruptions.*

- b. Arrange the group in a circle if possible. Assign a discussion topic. Depending on your group and how familiar the learners are with each other, consider relatively safe topics such as thoughts and feelings on school culture. Something with more emotional depth might be discussing a recent event about which learners would have entirely different perspectives. An alternative is to conduct a listening circle about the themes in **UnBroken**.
- c. You may wish to have a symbolic item that each speaker holds while talking to remind everyone to take turns and not to interrupt.
- d. Leave time to close the circles with gratitude to those who shared and listened, as well as reflections about any shifts in understanding that took place. Follow up with any learners who may have had a particularly difficult time with the exercise.

### **3. Research project: Empathy in Action**

**UnBroken** portrays a number of examples of the quiet bravery of people whose empathy led them to action on behalf of Jewish people during the Holocaust. Research a person (historical or contemporary) who has taken compassionate action in response to injustice or the suffering of a person or group unlike them. Create a slideshow to present your findings.



Examples include:

Irena Sendler, Warsaw Ghetto  
Clara Barton, American Red Cross  
Jane Addams, Hull House  
Paul Rusesabagina, Hôtel des Mille Collines  
Bryan Stevenson, Equal Justice Initiative  
Chiara Lubich, Focolare Movement  
William Wilberforce, trans-Atlantic slavery  
Ryan Hreljac, Ryan's Well

Include in your slideshow:

- a. A short (paragraph) biography of your subject.
- b. Details about their compassionate action and the community they acted alongside or represented. If possible, an account of what led them to take action. Was it a personal experience or event that inspired them, or something more general?
- c. An assessment of the risks and consequences of their actions.
- d. A reflection about how you hope you might have acted if faced with the same circumstances. Would you do anything differently? What personal values, beliefs, or experiences might shape your decision to act or not, or the kind of action you would take? Are there barriers to action that you can identify?

**4. Create an Empathy Zine** that shows what empathy means to you and how it can shape relationships, communities, and justice.

Learners can consider their own journey and experiences around empathy, people who have taught or inspired them, and examples from their community, such as mutual aid networks, bystander intervention, clothing and/or food drives, and even protest and other forms of civic engagement. They may wish to include in their zine:

- a. Text: original writing, poetry, snippets of text cut from other sources, quotes, timelines, newspaper article clippings, etc.
- b. Visual representations: drawings, photographs, collage, stickers, emojis, memes, other tools of visual storytelling, etc.

**5. Write a poem or short story**, taking the perspective of someone else.

Write about what you notice or feel when you see life from their point of view as opposed to your own.

*Facilitator's tip: This activity will be most impactful if learners consider a specific individual — a family member, classmate, or someone in the community — rather than a generic person. For example, a migrant family on their street rather than migrants in general, or a family friend who is grieving rather than people who have lost someone in general. If this is challenging for some students, an alternative is to provide photographs from newspapers or other sources where context is obvious and discuss them in advance.*

## Useful Terms / Related Vocabulary

**Civic empathy:** The ability to understand and respect the experiences of others in ways that strengthen community connection and democratic participation.

**Civic engagement:** Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. Promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

**Deep listening:** The practice of paying attention to a speaker's verbal and nonverbal communication in order to perceive and understand the deeper meaning, behavior, emotions, and intentions that lie beneath their words. Deep listening is used to help the speaker uncover their own understanding and self-awareness.

**Empathy:** Understanding a person from their frame of reference rather than one's own, or vicariously experiencing that person's behavior, feelings, perceptions, and thoughts.

**Perspective taking:** Looking at a situation from a viewpoint that is different from one's usual angle. This may involve adopting the perspective of another person or that associated with a particular social role, as in role play exercises.

**Sympathy:** The feeling of concern for someone who is experiencing something difficult or painful.

**Tippling point:** The point at which a series of small changes or incidents becomes significant enough to cause a larger, more important change.

**Viewpoint:** A position or perspective

**Zine:** A zine, short for fanzine or magazine, is a vehicle for visual storytelling and/or the convenience of information in a short compact format with visuals. Zines are known for being DIY and part of a subculture focused on self-publication. They were traditionally made on paper and reproduced with a photocopier or printer. This tradition continues, but virtual zines also exist. Zine creators are often motivated by a desire to share knowledge or experience. Some zines are created by small presses or cooperatives.

## Additional Resources

### Civic Engagement:

**20 Civic Engagement Activities for High School Students** from Kialo Blog:

<https://blog.kialo-edu.com/lesson-ideas/civic-engagement-activities-for-high-school-students/>

**A Toolkit for Supporting Youth Civic Engagement in Underserved Communities** from Generation Citizen:

[https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GenerationCitizen-Toolkit\\_360-Civic-Learning-updated-8.12.19.pdf](https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GenerationCitizen-Toolkit_360-Civic-Learning-updated-8.12.19.pdf)

**Civic Engagement** from American Psychology Association:

<https://www.apa.org/education-career/undergrad/civic-engagement>

**“Civic Engagement Can Boost Youth Mental Health,”**

The Jed Foundation:

<https://jedfoundation.org/civic-engagement-can-boost-youth-mental-health/>

**Civics Resources** from the American Association of State and Local Histories:

<https://aaslh.org/civics/>

**Five Ways to Increase Civic Engagement** from Social Studies.org:

<https://www.socialstudies.org/>

**iCivics** (Learning Hub for Civic Education):

<https://vision.icivics.org/>

**Youth Civic Hub** (Created by Youth, For Youth):

<https://www.youthcivichub.org/>

### **Listening Circle Resources:**

**Information and resources on Circle Practice** from “Ways of Council”:

<https://waysofcouncil.net/>

**“Tips on Implementing Restorative Circles in your School”**

from Novak Education:

<https://www.novakeducation.com/blog/tips-on-implementing-restorative-circles-in-your-school>

**“Using Talking Circles in the Classroom”** pdf by Alaina Winters, Heartland Community College:

<https://share.google/HJXko8yXiFRrn5YVw>

### **Zine-making Resources:**

**Free Tutorial: Make an 8-Page Zine** from L.A. Zine Fest:

<https://www.lazinefest.com/resources>

**How to Make Zines** from The Library of Congress:

<https://guides.loc.gov/zines/external-websites>

**Intro to Zines** from ZineLibraries:

<https://www.zinelibraries.info/running-a-zine-library/intro-to-zines/>

# Empathy Map

## Says

What did they say about the story?  
What words or phrases jumped out to you?

What do you think they were thinking when they recounted their story? What about when it happened? What beliefs might underlie these thoughts?

## Thinks

Write the name of the person whose perspective you're considering and 1–2 sentences about the event:



## Feels

What emotions do you think they were feeling as they recounted their story?  
What about when it happened?

What actions and behaviors did you notice as they recounted their story?  
What can you infer from these?

## Does



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### IMAGE CREDITS

COVER & PAGE 2: *UnBroken* Film Poster by Bill Howard

PAGE 4: Headshot of Liam Neeson, courtesy of Journeys in Film

PAGE 5: Weber family Photo Courtesy of USHMM May 20, 1945 New York Harbor

PAGES 6-7: Photo courtesy of Anna Andlauer; ID photos courtesy of Weber family archives

PAGE 8: Headshot of Beth Lane by Austin Hargrave

PAGE 9: Photo of Beth Lane by Chad Batka

PAGE 10: Animated still for *UnBroken* created by Misfit, courtesy of the production

PAGE 14: *UnBroken* personal archives, circa 1956

PAGE 22: *UnBroken* production still, Berlin 2019

PAGES 28: Weber family tree, comprising ID photos courtesy of Weber family archives

PAGE 42: *UnBroken* production still



## ***Educating for Global Understanding***

### **JOURNEYS IN FILM RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

**We create educational resources** that spark community discussions and/or promote proactive learning for youth, parents, educators in K-12 and higher education, home-schoolers, and other learning communities. We also **create impact materials for libraries and community organizations.**

We leverage our established educational relationships to **promote materials in active outreach** to these audiences. We **extend the reach of a film and its lifespan** in the educational marketplace and beyond.

We work with a wide array of partners (non-profit organizations, educational institutions, educators, museums, teacher training institutes) to **develop resources tailored to the individuals and communities we work with and the audiences they seek to reach.**

Our resources focus on cultivating human empathy and compassion, developing a deeper knowledge of global issues and current challenges, and encouraging civic engagement.



*Journeys in Film is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the use of film to promote a richer understanding of our diverse and complex world.*

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